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RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1670
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE PRIORITY
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 6244
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7160
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9376
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT PRIORITY 1904
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 2912
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 0212
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 8254
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 019126

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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PK](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: PAKISTAN ELECTIONS (6): THE U.S. ROLE

REF: A. ISLAMABAD 19121
[1](#)B. ISLAMABAD 19122
[1](#)C. ISLAMABAD 19123
[1](#)D. ISLAMABAD 19124
[1](#)E. ISLAMABAD 19125

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Peter W. Bodde,
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C/NF) Summary and introduction: The U.S. casts an outsized shadow over Pakistani domestic politics; with the onset of these elections, we have an opportunity to nudge Pakistan toward a stable and sustainable democratic order. Throughout the coming year, we should confirm our support for a fair electoral contest, continue strengthening democratic institutions, encourage Musharraf and the moderate parties to continue talking (without posing as a deal-broker ourselves) and privately be clear with Musharraf about our long-term expectations. Throughout, we must temper our public remarks to avoid having our words distorted and used as weapons in domestic political battles.

[1](#)2. (C) This is the final cable in a series mapping the political terrain in advance of Pakistan's nationwide elections in 2007. In the months ahead, post will track possible pre- and post-election alliances, monitor the parties' campaign strategies and assess emerging trends and issues that resonate with the electorate. End summary and introduction.

Decision Point 2007

[1](#)3. (C/NF) Pakistan is a critical front in the war on terror, both in the near war and the long. It has a strong record as a partner today, but victory in the long war will depend on Pakistan's evolution into a progressive, stable and democratic partner. Post is convinced that Musharraf shares this long-term objective, although his progress to date has been slow and halting. If he succeeds, Pakistan has the

potential to be a significant force for moderation in the Muslim world as an all-too-rare example of a pluralistic, democratic Muslim state. The upcoming elections loom as a potential watershed for Pakistan; we have a strong interest in both encouraging credible elections and in helping Pakistan achieve a new, stable, less-polarized democratic order after the elections.

Building a Foundation for Credible Elections

¶4. (C/NF) Laying the groundwork for legitimate elections in 2007, post has successfully encouraged the appointment of an empowered and independent Chief Election Commissioner. USAID is working to help build the capacity of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to develop new voter rolls and prepare procedures to help protect the integrity of the polling process. We must continue to press all parties to work with the ECP to resolve outstanding issues and design an electoral framework acceptable to all sides; without such a consensus, the parties will lapse into questioning the legitimacy of the vote, regardless of the ultimate conduct of the polls. Additional support for election observation and strengthening the ECP is required. The latter should be contingent on the commitment by both the GOP and ECP to fair elections. The U.S. has put Musharraf and other PML leaders on notice that we expect these elections to be a qualitative improvement over those of the past. This is a message we should underscore -- privately -- with Musharraf at every opportunity. These elections will not be perfect, but we can work to ensure that they represent a recognizable step

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forward.

¶5. (C/NF) As to helping Pakistan achieve a more stable, less-polarized democratic order, a well-managed election that the perceived by the public as fair and credible is the first step toward promoting post-election stability, precluding the unrest that follows blatant rigging. Beyond this, we should also encourage moderate parties -- the PPP, the MQM and the ANP -- to work constructively with the President and the government. Most importantly, we must continue our private dialogue with Musharraf, making clear our expectation that he empower civilian institutions and relinquish his military role in accordance with current constitutional requirements.

Stepping Up to Play a Constructive Role

¶6. (C/NF) The PPP can play a critical role. Although an accommodation between Benazir and Musharraf is the most desirable outcome, it must be worked out without external mediators. Each knows what the other brings to the table. U.S. interests and Pakistani interests would be served by disabusing Benazir of any hope that the U.S. will enter the negotiation and force Musharraf to accept her terms. Even if it were possible for a third party to broker a deal, outside intervention would retard a genuine sense of shared interest, thereby undermining the desired post-election stability. A failed third-party attempt to intercede could back-fire, leading to a rancorous and polarizing electoral contest and a winner-take-all post-election environment.

¶7. (C/NF) If Musharraf and Benazir do not reach a pre-election arrangement, we will face a closely-divided parliament following the 2007 election, in which coalition government would be the order of the day. The USG will need to encourage all progressive elements to stand together in order to build a strong, workable government. If Musharraf and Benazir fail to cut a pre-election deal or reach a post-election accommodation and the PPP remains outside the tent, Pakistan will have lost the chance for a truly progressive government -- and Musharraf will have significantly greater challenges to lead the country on a

steadily moderate course.

Engineering a Soft Landing

18. (C/NF) There is a prospect for a soft landing after eight years of military-led government -- a first in Pakistan's history. With a fresh legislature enjoying new-found legitimacy, Musharraf as a purely civilian president, a military that has inched back from the political arena -- and a new degree of comity among the three -- Pakistan may at last turn a page on its dysfunctional and polarized political history. The U.S. has an important role to play in this drama: encouraging a fair electoral contest; building the capacity of democratic institutions; encouraging Musharraf and the moderate parties to continue talking (without posing as a deal-broker ourselves); and being clear with Musharraf in private about our long-term expectations.

BODDE